

CIA-RDP80R01284A00

14 October 1969

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

Morning Meeting of 14 October 1969

ADD/I reported that he still has no definite word on whether the Director will be asked to brief at tomorrow's NSC meeting on U. S. Latin American policy. He added that a briefing paper is ready for the Director's possible use on the topic of subversion in Latin America.

Godfrey briefed on the sinking of a North Korean armed "spy vessel" off the southern coast of Korea. He noted that the planes which sank the ship were USAF and added that according to press reports a North Korean spy group is allegedly operating in central Korea.

The diagram consists of two horizontal bars. The left bar is shorter and the right bar is longer. The right bar has a small vertical line segment at its left end.

* DD/S noted the item by Martin Waldron in today's New York Times, "Arms Linked to 'Agency,'" and went on to express the view that, had we been involved as alleged, we would have known it. The Director asked the DD/S to focus on the reported June raid. He asked Houston to provide the DD/S with background data on [] and directed that the IG examine and report on all Regulations pertaining to the shipment and requisitioning of arms.

Carver reported that we now have Secretary of the Army Resor's trip report and the annex thereto criticizing the PHOENIX program as being ill-conceived and without expected progress. DDCI noted that

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PHOENIX worked well in I Corps area, and Carver said that they will be examining the report in detail.

Maury mentioned that James Gehrig, Staff Director of the Senate Aeronautical and Space Sciences Committee, was briefed on Soviet space activity.

Maury related the view of Russ Blandford that our Estimates on Soviet military matters are overly conservative in assessing Soviet capabilities.

Maury briefed on the status of our proposed legislation seeking parity with the McGee/Daniels bill and added that it will probably be some two weeks before our proposed legislation is seriously considered by the House Armed Services Committee.

*The Director noted that Chairman Mahon advised him that Bob Michaels has been replaced by Samuel Preston. The Director asked Maury to take the necessary steps to brief Mr. Preston.

Houston noted the quantity of letters of appreciation received from Cuban refugees [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Houston called attention to an item in the 17 October Time magazine in which Herbert Itkin claims to have known Allen Dulles. Houston added that we have no information to support this claim.

Parrott briefed on the recent meeting of Admiral Anderson's PFIAB Soviet Offensive Threat Sub-panel. He added that Governor Nelson Rockefeller did attend.

The Director noted a second letter from Rand employees in today's Washington Post. It was noted that Bob Komer now works for Rand. Mention was also made that Nicholas Katzenbach's former staff assistant, Jack Rosenthal, is now working for the New York Times.

DD/S&T mentioned that there is nothing significant to report on the Soviet space effort.

TOP SECRET

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25X1

25X1

Executive Director noted the possibility that some employees might inquire whether it would be appropriate to wear black armbands in observance of tomorrow's Vietnam Moratorium. He suggested that, if employees indicate they wish to observe the Moratorium, they should be advised to take annual leave. The Director concurred, noting that this is a personal matter.

DDCI noted that he will be visiting [redacted] tomorrow. The Director asked that he take this afternoon's 4 p.m. meeting of the Under Secretaries Committee on Peaceful Nuclear Explosions and The Limited Test Ban Treaty.

25X1

The Director called attention to the items by David Broder ("Ill-Advised Viet Moratorium Could Set a Risky Precedent") and Joseph Kraft ("Viet War Is Being Prolonged By Aides Who Defer to Nixon") in today's Washington Post.

[redacted]
L. K. White

*Extracted and sent to action officer

TOP SECRET

14 OCT 1969

Arms Linked to 'Agency'

By MARTIN WALDRON

Special to The New York Times

FAYETTEVILLE, N. C., Oct.

12—Two men familiar with a five-ton cache of war supplies seized here last June, a cache that has figured in Senate testimony concerning Maj. Gen. Carl C. Turner, assert that the supplies had been stockpiled and shipped with the knowledge and cooperation of a "Federal agency."

Without specifically saying so, the two men, Earl V. Redick Sr., a gun dealer, and Carl A. Barrington Jr., his attorney, broadly hinted that the "Federal agency" was the Central Intelligence Agency and that Mr. Redick's farm home had been used as a way station for weapons being shipped out of the country.

It is not known whether General Turner had any idea that a Federal agency would have anything to do with weapons that he sold and were later found in the cache.

Philip R. Manuel, an investigator for the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, told the panel last week that the seized weapons had been headed for revolutionaries in Haiti.

It has been brought out at the hearings that the cache was seized by the United States Bureau of Customs in a raid on Mr. Redick's farm. According to Mr. Manuel's testimony, the cache included several guns that had been given to General Turner by the police departments of Kansas City, Mo., and Chicago.

The raid on the farm was staged June 25. Two days later Mr. Redick's gun shop here was searched and 65 other guns were seized. Mr. Manuel testified that 23 guns — 7 found at Mr. Redick's farm and 16 found at the shop — were traced to General Turner.

No charges have been filed against anyone in connection with the raid on the farm.

General Turner, the former Provost Marshall-General of the Army, took possession of a number of rifles and pistols at Chicago last November after he had retired from active duty, according to testimony at the hearings. Previously, while still in the Army, he got other weapons in Kansas City. The general signed a document in Chicago saying that the guns were to go to the Army for training purposes.

Lawyer Charges Lie

Mr. Barrington said that his client, Mr. Redick, had been "maligned" and that General Turner had been "lied about" in testimony that the retired general had got the guns for personal profit. Mr. Manuel had testified that General Turner had sold Mr. Redick weapons given the general for the use of the Army.

Mr. Barrington also denied that the weapons had been headed for Haiti. The attorney said that a "mystery" man who headed the operation had said the guns were to go to the African Republic of Chad.

Although the raid on Mr. Redick's farm 10 miles west of here was made in June, the matter has not yet been presented to a grand jury. The United States Attorney in Raleigh said he had no plans to present it to the October grand jury.

Evidence that Mr. Redick kept incomplete records and had illegal automatic weapons at his gun store, the Pine State Gun Shop, also has not been presented to a grand jury.

Neither Mr. Barrington nor Mr. Redick would name the "Federal agency" that they said had cleared the guns, but Mr. Barrington said, "You can figure it out."

The attorney said that the "certain Federal agency" was not the Federal Bureau of Investigation or the Bureau of Customs or the Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms Division of the Treasury.

Asked if it was the C.I.A., Mr. Barrington said, "No comment."

'I Wish I Could Tell'

"I wish I could tell the whole story," Mr. Barrington said. "The nation deserves to know it, but I must protect my client."

Mr. Barrington said that Mr. Redick had rented a cinder block building on his farm to a Yonkers, N. Y., gun dealer, George DeMeo. There is no record of a Yonkers gun dealer named George DeMeo.

However, in July of 1965 a man identified by the police as George de Meo, 31 years old, was arrested with two others on charges of having amassed an illegal arms cache in Brooklyn for shipment to anti-Castro forces in Cuba.

All of the men were formally charged with illegal possession of weapons and conspiracy and released on \$2,500 bond each. Information concerning the disposition of the case was not immediately available.

According to sources in Fayetteville, Mr. DeMeo also was a weapons importer and had been selling weapons to the Republic of Chad with State Department approval.

The sale was said to have been arranged by Henry Vixamar, a shadowy figure accused last year by Haiti of plotting to overthrow her Government.

A third and final shipment of war materials for Chad was to be stored pending instructions, the Fayetteville sources say.

The five tons of materiel was brought to Fayetteville by truck and stored in Mr. Redick's outbuilding behind his green frame residence on U. S. Highway 41, the sources report.

In June, they continue, Mr. DeMeo was told to deliver the weapons to an isolated Forestry Service airport near Wilmington, N. C., after midnight on June 27.

After receiving these orders, the sources say, Mr. DeMeo and Mr. Redick reported these instructions to the "certain Federal agency in Washington" on June 22.

On June 23, Mr. DeMeo and Mr. Redick were visited by a special agent of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Lacy M. Walthall Jr.

In an affidavit filed with an application for a warrant to search the Redick home, Mr. Walthall said:

"On June 23, 1969, George DeMeo stated to me that he had sold approximately five tons of arms, ammunition, and camouflage uniforms to Henry Vixamar in New York and transported them to Earl V. Redick Sr.'s residence, Highway 401 South, Fayetteville, N.C., for delivery to Vixamar. I personally observed the above munitions on Mr. Redick's premises at about 2 P.M. on June 23, 1969, at the invitation of, and in the presence of, George DeMeo and Earl V. Redick Sr."

That same day or the next day, the sources here say, Mr. DeMeo was told by Mr. Vixamar or by an associate of his not to take the weapons to Wilmington but to bring them to Florida.

On June 24, the customs agents in Wilmington heard about some weapons transactions.

In another affidavit filed with the application for a search warrant, Philip R. Bowen, the customs agent in charge at Wilmington, said: "On June 24, 1969, I received reliable information from a source that had been reliable in the past, that Henry Vixamar of Miami, Fla., and New York, N. Y., had purchased a quantity of firearms, ammunition, and military uniforms, from George DeMeo in New York, N. Y. which he intended to export illegally."

On June 25, Johnny Bouras, a special investigator for the Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms Division, came to the Pine State Gun Shop.

Mr. Bouras made an inventory of the more than 2,500 guns in the store and found several that were not listed on the gun shop records. The inventory took three days.

It was on June 25 that Mr. Bowen, the customs agent, applied for and got the warrant to search Mr. Redick's home and the outbuilding where the five tons of supplies was stored.

Customs agents seized 58 .30-caliber M-1 Garand rifles, 10 .30-caliber M-1 carbines, five .45-caliber automatic pistols, one Browning automatic rifle, one M-2 carbine, one Cevarz Faktori automatic rifle, 71,817 rounds of ammunition, 305 skeet targets, 12 mess kits, 48 empty bullet bandoliers, 53 pairs of black boots, 25 jungle coveralls, 42 cartridge belts, 12 water canteens, 18 rifle slings, 30 M-1 rifle clips, nine blocks of C-4 explosives, 75 feet of primer cord and a number of miscellaneous items.

The ammunition included machine-gun bullets and tracer bullets.

Regarding the fact that no charges were filed against Mr. Redick or Mr. DeMeo in connection with the weapons and ammunition found at Mr. Redick's home, Mr. Barrington said: "They had finally got around to checking and they found out that Mr. DeMeo had the proper papers and licenses for these weapons."

On June 27, Mr. Bouras got a warrant to search the gun shop and agents of the Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms Division seized 65 rifles and pistols and a large number of parts for M-1 rifles there.

That day Mr. Redick was arrested by Bobby A. Marshall, a special investigator for the Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms Division, on charges of having incomplete records and possessing automatic weapons and parts of automatic weapons at his gun shop, "in violation of the Gun Control Act of 1968."

Mr. Redick was released under \$5,000 bond on his own recognizance by United States Commissioner C. Wallace Jackson.

Mr. Barrington said that the "customs and alcohol tax boys are very red-faced" over the raid at Mr. Redick's home and that he had insisted three times that the Government bring Mr. Redick to trial in connection with that raid.

'A Lame Duck'

The United States Attorney for the Eastern District of North Carolina, Robert H. Cowen, said it would be unethical for him to discuss the details of the case. He said he could not do so in any event while on it from Customs agents only last week and had not yet had a chance to read it.

continued

He added that he was "a lame duck" and that he would leave the case to his successor.

Last June, Mr. Bowen, the customs agent, was quoted as saying that the five tons of arms, ammunition and equipment seized at Mr. Redick's home had been destined for Haiti.

"I think the Government just pulled the name of Haiti out of the air," said Mr. Barrington.

The attorney said that Mr. Vixamar, whom he referred to as "Henri," had never mentioned Haiti, only the Republic of Chad.

In June, 1968, the Haitian Government accused Mr. Vixamar and 11 other men of "co-responsibility" for an unsuccessful invasion attempt on May 20 of that year.

The allegation was made during the trial of 10 prisoners who were said to have been among 35 foreign mercenaries who tried to invade Haiti after air raids on the cities of Port-au-Prince, the capital, and Cap-Haitien.

Mrs. Redick, interviewed while she was cleaning her car outside the Redick residence, said that General Turner was an old family friend. She said the general "always kisses me" when he arrives to talk with Mr. Redick.

General Turner has been a licensed gun dealer, and he testified before the Senate subcommittee that he considered the weapons given to him by the Chicago and Kansas City police departments to be his to dispose of as he saw fit.

The general said that he had not originally listed money from the sale of the weapons on his income tax returns but had since amended them to reflect any such profits.

He said his weapons records book, which he is required by law to keep as a gun dealer, had been lost or stolen.

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CRIME

Crisis of Silence

Nobody loves an informer. But in fighting organized crime, the Government needs professional informers to provide courtroom testimony; most other witnesses are reluctant to give it because it is axiomatic that in certain cases a short memory means a longer life. That is why federal prosecutors have cherished an obscure but highly talkative New York labor lawyer named Herbert Itkin. Currently, Itkin is creating a crisis for the law enforcers.

Until 1967, Itkin was an FBI and Justice Department informer, operating among Mafia families. He surfaced two years ago to testify in the successful prosecution of a graft case in New York. Since then, he has helped convict or indict more than 20 other mobsters. According to federal authorities, Itkin's intelligence could produce another 30 separate racketeering cases against about 50 defendants. But since May, Itkin has refused to testify—for bizarre reasons that oddly illuminate the worlds of both crime and law enforcement.

Opaque Logic. After his cover was destroyed by his 1967 court appearance, Itkin and his present wife were placed in protective custody. Later, the Government provided the same protection for Itkin's former wife and their four children. As he finished testimony in a case last spring, Itkin was warned by parties unknown that if he made any further appearances, his wife's two sons by a previous marriage would be "crippled." Itkin naturally expected the usual protection to be granted to the two boys, Scot Hersh, 12, and Bret, 11. But so far this has been refused. The biggest obstacle has been the opaque logic



ITKIN

An unused spy.

of the Westchester County Family Court, which at one point sanctioned security arrangements for the youngsters. That decision was inexplicably revoked after 29 days. Three county judges have ruled separately on the case, rebuffing the Government's plea for assistance.

Unplush Life. Trapped in legal wrangling and worried about the boys, Itkin, 43, appears gaunt and sallow these days. The glamour (or what he regarded as glamour) of his crisis-laden career has faded. Fresh from Brooklyn Law School in 1954, Itkin began his undercover activities almost immediately as an informant for Senator Joseph McCarthy. The McCarthy connection led to an introduction to Allen Dulles, then Central Intelligence Agency director. Itkin joined the agency and was used mainly as a payoff man in Britain and in the Caribbean. "In the 1960s, I began to meet hoods," he recalls. "They were the best source of information in the Caribbean." While working with the CIA, Itkin managed to maintain a lucrative law practice. In fact, his CIA connections lengthened his list of clients and for a while he was making \$60,000 a year. Then, at the CIA's suggestion, he began cooperating with the FBI because of his developing contacts with gangsters. Itkin became a wheeler-dealer within Mafia circles, functioning, for instance, as a middleman and graft collector on loans made by Teamsters Union pension funds. He would pass on a percentage to the gangsters, while keeping a cut for himself.

Now he and his wife live on a military post, where they can use officers' recreational facilities if they wish. Federal marshals provide round-the-clock guard service. It is a frustrating life; the product of his years of spying is unused. "Are we waging a war on crime or aren't we?" he asks. The answer on the Itkin front, at least, seems to be equivocal. While the Hersh children are still vulnerable, one of the Government's

Letters to The Editor

A Differing View on U.S. Withdrawal

In your Letters column last Sunday, some of our Rand colleagues advocated an unconditional total withdrawal of U.S. military forces from Vietnam within one year. We wish to make clear that there are others at Rand with equivalent professional experience in Vietnam and Southeast Asia who, as individuals, hold different views as to the preferred U.S. policy.

On Vietnam, as well as other subjects, government sponsors of Rand research have sought diversity of views and analysis from among Rand staff members. The signers of both of these letters have had opportunities for presenting their views in a variety of forms—publicly and in proprietary research.

Our disagreement with the views of our colleagues is fundamental. They underrate the continued relevance and importance of the basic principles that underlie the war in Vietnam. Resisting aggression and the use of force to change political boundaries appears to us no less worthy a principle because it has been difficult to apply in Vietnam. Certainly we have made mistakes, major ones, in Vietnam but we strongly support the guiding purposes behind American policy there.

The past costs we have incurred in lives, dollars and domestic tranquility testify to the seriousness of our purpose and the magnitude of our resolve. It is now perfectly proper for us as a nation to limit the costs we are prepared to bear in the further defense of Vietnam. We believe that there should be a major reduction in our military forces and activities in Vietnam, and this reduced level of effort should not be conditional. But we do not agree that the South Vietnamese are so little capable of ever defending themselves that it is unwarranted to incur some additional costs to permit them the opportunity to do so. And the truth of the matter is that, in part, the improvements still needed in their defense capabilities reflect past U.S. decisions and activities, including over-Americanization of the war.

An unconditional reduction in our forces need not, and should not, be carried out as a policy of despair. There are signs of continuing improvement in the effectiveness of the Saigon government and South Vietnam's armed forces. A responsible reduction in U.S. military support can help to assure the fullest possible contribution to their own defense by the South Vietnamese themselves. Such a reduction can take place with reasonable, not certain, prospects of success.

We share our colleagues' judgment that the North Vietnamese have demonstrated remarkable "resiliency, determination and effectiveness" and that they can be expected to continue to do so in the future. The same can be said of the South Vietnamese. It would be as great an error to base U.S. policy on an overly pessimistic view of the latter as on an overly optimistic view of the former, particularly today when many of the past impediments to South Vietnamese performance have been removed. The South Vietnamese government's "capacity to survive on its own" is, indeed, the test—and one which we believe they can pass with limited, temporary and declining assistance from us. And this is precisely the kind of assistance we should now give—in order to assure the fullest contribution from the South Vietnamese, and in order to limit the costs we must bear. But simply pulling out precipitously leaving behind important military lacunae and the expectation of only half-hearted political support in the future would place crushing, not stimulating, pressure on the Saigon government.

Professional experience, no matter how great, still leaves unresolved uncertainties. The above views reflect both. So do those of our colleagues in their letter.

CHARLES COOPER,
HANS HEYMANN JR.,
ALBERT P. WILLIAMS JR.
and CHARLES WOLF JR.

Santa Monica, Cal.

John B. Riordan

Secretary At Embassy

John Barnes Riordan, 61, retired Foreign Service officer and former first secretary at the Saigon embassy, died yesterday after a heart attack at his home in Dobbs Ferry, N.Y.

He had moved there two weeks ago to teach history at the Masters School, a girls prep school, after he had retired from government service last year. He formerly lived in Oakton, Va.

A native of St. Paul, Minn., and a graduate of the University of Minnesota, Mr. Riordan was formerly with the Veterans Administration and the Central Intelligence Agency. He had served with embassies in Rome and Cairo and was on the staff of Gen. George C. Marshall during World War II.

He was a lieutenant colonel in the Army Reserve and held the Army Legion of Merit, the Medal of Valor and the Meritorious Service Medal.

Surviving are his wife, Nathalie Kuhlman, and five children: David E., of Madrid; Mrs. William H. Bohnsack, of London; Patrice C. Riordan, of Kensington; Jeris K. Riordan, of Singapore, and Michael P., of Rochester, N.Y.



David S. Broder

Ill-Advised Viet Moratorium Could Set a Risky Precedent

CAMBRIDGE, Mass.—The larger the plans for Wednesday's Vietnam moratorium, the more the central message and tactic of the demonstration have been obscured. If the event is to be gauged properly, it is important to uncover its original premises from the debris of clichés and endorsements in which they have lately been buried.

A number of men active in the moratorium have taken time to point out what they consider the errors of the argument in this column last week that it is a plan for "the breaking of the President." With sincerity and conviction, they have asserted that, far from breaking the President, they are out to save him, by persuading him to make the peace the nation craves and, incidentally, to save the political system by keeping the antiwar movement out of the hands of the radicals and in control of those with a commitment to peaceful forms of protest.

Their conversations and correspondence have helped to define three questions which might be borne in mind by those planning to participate in the moratorium.

First, what is the target of this protest? Sam Brown, the able spokesman for the moratorium, says it is not an anti-Nixon move because "we learned in 1968 that what we must oppose are not personalities but policies."

But if the Nixon administration is following the very policies recommended in 1968 by the antiwar faction, as I believe, then their moratorium is mobilizing public opinion against its own policy recommendation to the President. The minority plank at the Democratic convention, endorsed by all the leading doves, called for a halt in the bombing of North Vietnam. This has been done. It recommended a reduction in offensive operations in South Vietnam. The President has ordered this and it is in effect.

IT ASKED for "a phased withdrawal over a relatively short period of time" of all foreign troops. The Nixon administration has begun pulling Americans out of Vietnam without waiting for North Vietnam to agree to

mutual withdrawals, as the doves thought necessary.

Finally, it recommended that the United States use the leverage of troop withdrawals to "encourage" the Saigon government "to negotiate a political reconciliation with the National Liberation Front" looking toward "a broadly representative government" but recognizing that "the specific shape of this reconciliation will be a matter for decision by the South Vietnamese."

If this is not precisely the policy of the current administration, as enunciated by the President and the Secretary of State, then words have lost their meaning. And if the moratorium sponsors want to argue—as some have—that the President is lying about his purpose, their suspicions must be weighed against the facts of reduced fighting, reduced troop levels and reduced casualties, which his policies have brought about.

Second, what is the alternative they recommend? It has been described in moratorium publicity as everything from a negotiated settlement to immediate, total American withdrawal from Vietnam, but Brown said Sunday on "Face the Nation" that it is the latter that the moratorium has "consistently" demanded.

If that is the case, then the elected officials, clergymen and educators who have lent their prestige to the moratorium can properly be asked if this is the program they endorse. Many of these sponsors were involved in the fight for the minority plank at the Chicago convention which specifically said the war "will not be ended by military victory, surrender or unilateral withdrawal by either side."

It might be well for those men to explain Wednesday when and why they concluded that their opposition to unilateral withdrawal was wrong. It would be even more useful if they could explain why a one-dimensional plan to pull out troops is any more likely to be wise policy than the one-dimensional plan that sent the troops in. Have we not learned yet to examine the political consequences of military decisions?

Third, and most important, what about the method of the moratorium? Is it compatible with the maintenance of representative de-

mocracy or does it substitute the rule of the street?

THE SPONSORS say the name "moratorium," rather than "strike," was chosen to emphasize that the protest is to be peaceful and noncoercive. It is a nice distinction. The noncoercive feature may be almost invisible to the thousands of students whose colleges will shut down Wednesday. If the moratorium continues, as planned, for two days in November, three days in December, and so on, it will more and more come to resemble the general strike so familiar to European politics.

And if it succeeds in its aim, what is to prevent other majorities or sizable minorities in the country from using the same technique to force their views on agencies of the government? The moratorium sponsors say Vietnam is an extraordinary issue, but they must know it is not the only issue which agitates millions of people.

One wonders what the moratorium sponsors would say if Billy Graham were to ask all the parents who want prayers restored to public schools to withdraw their children from school for one additional day each month until the Supreme Court reverses its school-prayer decision.

Suppose pro-prayer teachers agreed to meet the pupils in private homes on moratorium days to discuss "the overriding significance of religion in human life." Would the Vietnam moratorium sponsors cheer? What would they say if landlords and real estate men opposed to integrated housing declared a moratorium until Congress repeals the open-housing law?

My view, just to be clear, is not that the Vietnamese moratorium is un-American, illegitimate, meanly partisan or personally vindictive in its motivation. My view is that it is an ill-timed, misdirected protest, vague in its purpose and quite conceivably dangerous in its precedent.

As was said last week, its immediate result may be the breaking of the President. In the serious weakening of his power to negotiate peace or to achieve any of the other purposes for which he was elected, its longer term effects may be to subvert a system of democratic government I happen to believe is worth preserving.



Joseph Kraft

Viet War Is Being Prolonged By Aides Who Defer to Nixon

SHALLOW - MINDED men, pleased to see every side of every question and thus gain the reputation for balanced judgment, are now gravely disparaging the Vietnam Moratorium as an impairment of the President's powers.

In this, they are not only wrong on the merits. They are—and this is far worse—practicing Washington's special form of sycophancy-cum-idol worship, the adoration of Presidents.

With respect to the merits, the Nixon administration has begun to withdraw troops and to wind down casualties by a changed tactical approach to the war. But the timing of these moves shows that they are direct responses to public pressure—particularly the sharp pressure for a change in tactics from former Ambassador Averell Harriman.

The present course being followed by the administration points toward further reduction of troops. But there is every reason to doubt that it will lead to total extrication from the war for years to come.

WITHOUT a firm commitment to get out in a specified time, the President will find himself under irresistible pressure from untoward events and a foot-dragging bureaucracy to keep troops on and on and on.

The administration's weak policy on troop withdrawal is matched by a wholly unrealistic position on the one sure way to get out of the war—through negotiations in Paris. The present policy of the Nixon administration

requires the other side to acknowledge—at least until after some kind of election under some kind of mixed authority—the authority of the present Saigon government.

All the evidence suggests that the other side is not going to make a settlement with the present Saigon regime. In that connection it is worth noting that, according to Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge and his deputy, Philip Habib, the other side decisively hardened its position in the Paris negotiations last March. That was right after the statement by President Nguyen Van Thieu indicating that any settlement would take place within the framework of the present Saigon regime.

At that point, there was no wavering in American public opinion. Thus the timing suggests that the other side is holding out, not with a main eye on American public opinion. It is holding out because the present Saigon government is so awful.

In these circumstances, the moratorium, far from being an indiscriminate protest, has two very specific points to press upon the administration. The first is that the President repudiate the present policy of reducing and hanging on in Vietnam in favor of a commitment to a total winding-down. The second is that the present Saigon government be broadened in ways that make it at least thinkable for the other side to negotiate.

BUT EVEN if these two

specific grievances were not at issue, there would be no case for scotching the moratorium in order to make life easier for the President. The fact is that responsible persons in Washington have for far too long been far too concerned about protecting Presidents—whether Kennedy, Johnson, or Nixon—on Vietnam.

For years, high advisers galore have harbored the sharpest doubts and gravest misgivings about Vietnam policy. But in deference to the President, as a mark of loyalty and fidelity, they have adjusted, or swallowed, or buried these views. That is how it happens that so many of the very best Americans have been publicly discredited. That is how it happens that, amidst nearly universal recognition of a terrible disaster, so very few leading figures (I can think only of former Secretary of Defense Clark M. Clifford and the late Sen. Robert F. Kennedy) have acknowledged that they made mistakes. That is how it happens that Vietnam protests, including the moratorium, have been mainly the work of the very young.

The truth is that almost all Americans of stature and reputation made grievous errors about Vietnam: Covering up now, pretending that these mistakes have been remedied, that all will be well if only matters are left to the President, can only make matters worse. It can only further persuade the young that the system is corrupt.